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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 001932

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SUBJECT: TFIZ01: FOOD SUPPLIES IN BASRAH GOVERNORATE

SUMMARY

1. Representatives of the Iraqi Ministry of Trade (MOT), DART, WFP, and Coalition forces met on 4 May at the CMOC in Basrah to review the status of Basrah's Public Distribution System (PDS) for food rations, and to determine what immediate steps need to be taken to enable officials in Basrah Governorate to carry out a major food distribution by late May. End Summary.

LOCAL CAPACITY AND REQUIREMENTS

2. Ministry of Trade (MOT) staff reported that the nine mills in Basrah are operating at full capacity, with a combined flour production of 1,080 metric tons (MTs) per day. To date, only 3,332 MTs of the 6,000 MT required for one month's distribution have been milled. Coalition forces confirmed that wheat is moving from Basrah's main silo complex to the mills on a regular basis.

3. The silo complex currently holds an estimated 15,000 MTs of wheat. The MOT reports the silo's granary equipment is functioning, and that operations at the complex are in full-swing, despite earlier reports that a three to four week clean-up would be necessary.

4. The MOT listed the amount of supplies held in the Basrah and Az Zubayr warehouses (current balance), followed by the amounts needed for monthly distributions in Basrah Governorate (monthly requirement), as follows: tea : current balance : 1,886 MT / monthly requirement : 392 MT; vegetable oil : current balance : 4,430 MT / monthly requirement : 2,459 MT; weaning cereals : current balance : 3 MT / monthly requirement : 100 MT; salt : current balance : 318 MT / monthly requirement : 300 MT; milk powder : current balance : 21 MT / monthly requirement : 1,000 MT; lentils : current balance : 110 MT / monthly requirements : 975 MT; beans : current balance : 275 MT / monthly requirements : 975 MT; chick peas : current balance : 46 MT; monthly requirements : 975 MT; rice : current balance 0 MT / monthly requirements : 7,000 MT; wheat : current balance : 15,000 MT(silo/mills) and 3,300 MT (warehouses) / monthly requirement : 21,250 MT; infant formula : current balance : 667 MT / monthly requirement : 200 MT; detergent : current balance : 1,619 MT / monthly requirement : 964 MT; soap : current balance : 1,075 MT / monthly requirement : 600 MT.

5. The MOT reported that the significant shortfalls in weaning cereals and pulses are long-standing problems. (Note: These traditional shortfalls in protein-rich foods have been noted in other areas of southern Iraq, such as Umm Qasr. End Note.)

6. The MOT reported that there are 437 shipping containers at Port Umm Qasr, containing vegetable oil (5,750 MT); tea (450 MT); powdered milk (1,315 MT); soap (695 MTs); and detergent (503 MT). MOT staff believes the containers form part of two large shipments being shipped in tranches from Dubai, which were disrupted by the war. Coalition forces reported that there are currently 1,800 containers in Dubai, believed to be consigned to the Oil-For-Food Program.

7. The MOT, U.N. World Food Program (WFP), Coalition forces and the Maritime Department in Umm Qasr will review waybills and other records associated with the containers at the port to determine if they are part of a Dubai cargo and to identify the shipping company responsible for completing the transshipment.

LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

18. According to the MOT, there are several problems in getting the public distribution system (PDS) operational, and the MOT has asked for immediate assistance from the international community to restore the system.

19. With the Basrah Governorate's trucking fleet reduced from 21 trucks to 3 (most were stolen by looters), the MOT has asked Coalition forces and WFP for help in transporting the 437 containers from Port Umm Qasr to Basrah. The MOT estimates that 10 trucks could move the containers to Basrah in 40 days. (Note: Normally, the containers would be trucked directly from Umm Qasr to the designated Governorate. WFP is working to determine the pipeline needs in all southern Governorates. End Note.)

110. The lack of security continues to be a problem. MOT/Basrah computers at the central administrative offices and at the registration center complex were stolen or damaged during the fighting. Just last week, looters stole the air conditioners and desks in MOT's administrative offices, which are occupied by Coalition forces. WFP and the DART are working to address the problem of looted or damaged computers, which has occurred in several southern governorates and makes it all the more difficult for the MOT to begin its critical PDS function.

111. WFP has agreed to repair the damaged doors and locks in Basrah's central (Hartha) warehouse. The MOT is less sure about how to proceed on repairing or replacing the computer system in its central complex. In Basrah, MOT employees salvaged some PDS information by copying the information onto diskettes and hiding them during the fighting. But the MOT fears that if the computers are replaced, they might be looted again. MOT has so far resisted the idea of posting armed guards at its facilities.

112. Another problem is that Basrah lacks the administrative and registration forms used by the PDS program, which were previously supplied by Baghdad. The DART believes that WFP's EMOP could be used to recreate the forms during this phase of the operation and is working with WFP on this issue.

FOLLOW-ON

113. The participants agreed to meet again 7 May, and to include representatives of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and the U.K.'s Department for International Development. By the next meeting, the MOT is to provide a firmer estimate of the loose wheat grain stored in the central Basrah warehouse, WFP is to draft a governorate distribution plan and develop a chart of commodities arriving in the southern corridor. Coalition forces are to propose how to clear containers from Umm Qasr, suggest ways to increase security at the central Basrah warehouse complex, and set a date for the return of the administrative offices to MOT. The DART and WFP are expected to outline funding possibilities to cover the MOT's material needs, such as computers, office supplies, desks, chairs, etc.

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